

# Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

*Editor's Note: Content presented in the Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog is for awareness and informational purposes only, and it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool.*

The isolation of epilepsy is real. Those with epilepsy are reluctant to go out. They are afraid of having a seizure because having a seizure can be so unpredictable and embarrassing. Never knowing when or where a seizure takes place raises one's level of anxiety to a high level. The same script keeps running through your brain; "What if I have a seizure? What will people do? What will they think of me?" When a person comes out of a seizure, they wake up confused, embarrassed, and tired. They fear the embarrassment of the loss of bowel and bladder control. These and many other self-doubting questions run through their mind. Even if one has only had a few seizures, there is always the fear that silent (or not so silent) enemy may strike again. So why chance it?

The history of epilepsy is in a sense the history of stigma, which is deeply discrediting and can reduce a person with epilepsy from a whole and unique person to a tainted, discounted one. Stigma carries a sense of shame associated with being "epileptic" and the fear of discrimination. Fear, misunderstanding and the resulting social stigma surrounding epilepsy can result in social, and sometimes even legal discrimination.

All over the world, the social consequences of epilepsy are often the cause of more suffering than the seizures themselves. Problems are especially felt in the fields of education and employment, personal relationships and sometimes, even law.

These attitudes undermine the treatment of the condition globally. A fundamental part of ridding the world of the stigma, which has cost people with epilepsy so dearly for so long, is to raise public and professional awareness and to change the legislation which reinforces this fear and discrimination. Just the stress of dealing with society's often hostile attitudes toward disability in general, and epilepsy can cause you to hide your condition so you will not be stigmatized.

And there is the possibility of being "found out." So, isolation becomes preferable to social interaction. Confidence and self-esteem plummet replaced by feelings of helplessness and depression. Then there is the added emotional baggage of fearing recurring seizures. It is like a cloud hanging over your head, or impending doom. The loss of control, embarrassment, and humiliation strike again.

Contemporary western culture has glorified the image of the controlled and independent adult. The unpredictability of having a seizure, as well as the obvious loss of control during seizures, does not exactly fit this image. And by "failing" to meet these standards, a person's sense of self-worth is affected.

In one study, participants anticipated that their self-perceptions and self-esteem would be more positive if they did not have epilepsy. Self-perception turned out to be one of the most important

predictors of successful social relationships in people with epilepsy — even more important than seizure frequency, severity, or other medical factors!

Lots of people with epilepsy have physical disabilities which also limit independence. Like not having a driver's license and being stuck — except for rides from others or public transportation, which is not available everywhere. So, the ability to do simple things like grocery shopping, errands, getting to a doctor's appointment and just socializing in general are stymied.

Plus, with many there is the stress of not being able to commute to a job. Or not having a job at all. Which means no insurance, the agony of social security and whatever other financial assistance is available. More than 50% of people with seizures are either underemployed or unemployed. That is a staggering statistic. So, there is the economic strain of sustaining a household, not to mention the added expenses of anti-seizure meds.

The impact of epilepsy can be devastating and debilitating if you choose it to be. But it is also very manageable with the love, support, acceptance, openness and understanding of family, friends, peers, and the community.

With education, shared information, more self-knowledge, and acceptance, you can gain a greater sense of mastery over both your fears and your seizures. For more information about raising epilepsy awareness, contact the Epilepsy Alliance Ohio at 513-721-2905.

***Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.***  
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

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